



## ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE FUNERAL PROTOCOLS

### K9 LINE OF DUTY DEATH

#### I. Purpose:

The death of a K-9 member of any Law enforcement Agency is a tragedy. Many who work with K-9's in a variety of capacities understand that it is a tragic oversight that these selfless and loyal officers, rescuers, and partners are often overlooked by the communities they serve as well as the agencies and organizations that employ them. Therefore, it seems only appropriate that when a dog is killed in the line of duty or dies while in duty, that their services are honored. However, there is another component to this memorialization process, and that is also honoring the dog's handler and partner. The saying "funerals are for the living" is accurate, so this process is mostly about honoring the work the team did together during their partnership. This document is an attempt to create a protocol to bring some level of uniformity in honoring these trusted companions when they finally end their vigilant watch over our lives and communities.

#### II. Policy:

It is the policy of this Association to provide a funeral for a K-9 member, with the following procedures being followed. The level of intensity of the memorial services is defined by either a death in the line of duty, or a non-work related death of an active dog. A description of each level is listed below, followed by detailed procedures for conducting the particular memorial service type.

***\*\* In the case of both the K-9 handler and K-9 (dog) being killed in the line of duty, the protocol for the fallen Officer supersedes any/all other procedures, and shall be followed according to the wishes of the family, their Department guidelines and/or national standard for fallen Officer's funeral.***

***Arrangements for the burial/remembrance of the K-9 shall coincide with the fallen Officers funeral, and the fallen K-9 can accompany the officers casket (preferably in an urn) along with any photos, leashes, balls or any other K-9 equipment requested from the respective department, family member of the Officer/dog or from the Department's other K-9 handler (if applicable).***

***Family of the Officer and dog shall have the final decision for the actual burial of the dog either with its fallen handler or the family can choose to take custody of the K-9's remains for safe keeping at their home. The Department shall provide the urn for the fallen K-9 and provide the family with an American Flag for the Officer and K-9.***

***The respective Department shall still utilize a K-9 Liaison from the Department or any other surrounding Department to ensure proper planning of all incoming K-9 teams to the funeral, and to assure all protocols are being followed. The Liaison shall work hand in hand with the Funeral Committee, and at the direction of the Funeral Director for the fallen Officer.***

### III. Definitions:

- A. **Line-of-Duty Death:** When a K-9 dies due to injuries sustained while actively performing their duties. This is regardless if the death is due to assaultive actions of criminals, or incurred accidentally due to the chaos of the situation sometimes called the "fog of war."
- B. **Active Non-Work Related Death:** When a K-9 is still a working asset, and dies outside of their normal duties due to injury or conditions not related to their assignments in any way
- C. **Retired K-9 Death:** When a K-9 who has been formally retired from service, dies for any reason.
- D. **Honor Guard Representative:** This individual will be responsible for coordinating all Honor Guard participation for the appropriate services of the deceased K-9. This will include requesting outside assistance from other agency honor guards, pipe and drum corps, buglers, law enforcement walk-through, flag folding/presentation, etc. The Honor Guard Representative should be either the Honor Guard Commander or Assistant Commander if the Honor Guard Commander is unavailable. The Honor Guard Coordinator will work closely with a K-9 Liaison to ensure the handlers wishes are carried out exactly as requested.
- E. **Traffic Coordinator:** A member of the Command Staff that will work closely with the K-9 Liaison Officer for all traffic related issues including but not limited to the funeral procession route, barricades, parking at the funeral, and parking at the cemetery. This individual may also need to coordinate EMS and tow trucks. .
- F. **K-9 Liaison/Officer in Charge:** An individual(s) appointed by the Chief of Police/Sheriff or designee, who is responsible for the overall operation of the entire event. The K-9 Liaison/Officer in Charge shall ensure that all protocols are being followed by representatives and officers involved in the planning and operations of the event. In addition, the K-9 Liaison/Officer in Charge shall resolve any conflicts that may arise during the planning and execution phases of the event. Utilization of a K-9 handler within the agency or a neighboring agency would be recommended.

### IV. Honors Bestowed

Honors bestowed on K-9's are often comparable to their human counterparts. Any K-9's suffering a death after retirement as defined above, may be exempted by their agencies from receiving full honors, although this is discouraged. Any or all of the following guidelines may help in determining which is appropriate.

- Honor Guard

Honor Guard members shall be used if at all possible. Their roles may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Guarding the ashes until ceremony conclusion.
- All aspects of flag control, movement and/or presentation.
- Escort duties to the handler and/or their survivors if needed.

- Pall Bearer(s):
  - Pall Bearer(s) are to be at the discretion/approval of their K-9 handler or the handler's survivors.
  - It is recommended that the handler or their survivors not act as pall bearers unless they specifically request that responsibility.
  - If the choice is left to the employing agency, pall bearers will normally be a member of the Honor Guard or other K-9 handlers if possible.
  
- Flags:
  - Flags on a permanent flagpole at the Department/office and/or location of the memorial/service site shall be lowered to half-mast during the ceremony. Beyond that is the discretion of the controlling party.
  - If available, the K-9 patrol vehicle will be displayed outside the Department/office with bunting.
  - The remains of the fallen may be draped in a flag or have a flag displayed near the remains during the ceremony in honor of the fallen.
    - ❖ This flag shall be folded properly by an Honor Guard either before or during the ceremony.
    - ❖ This flag shall be presented to the K-9's handler or the handler's survivors by an Honor Guard member using appropriate protocols.
    - ❖ A shadowbox may be provided to the flag recipient at the discretion of those hosting the ceremony.
  
- Taps and/or Bagpipes:
  - It is both permissible and appropriate at all ceremonies for a fallen K-9 to have "taps" played and bagpipes played.

**V. Level 1 – Memorial Service/K-9 Killed in the Line of Duty:**

After Chief of Police and Commanders have been made aware of a line of duty death, a joint session will be conducted to review the funeral procedures. The purpose of the meeting is to coordinate resources, and services needed to conduct the memorial service.

The Commanders will designate a K-9 Liaison/Officer in charge who will be responsible for getting the appropriate information for service cards, communication with the Traffic Coordinator, Honor Guard representative, Emerald Society/Bag Pipe organization, and any other needs of the event.

When the Department/office is ready to release the dog's body, a call is made to the appropriate veterinarian. The dog's body will then be picked up, and a call will be placed to the handler who will then have the opportunity for a private visitation.

This visitation will take place within a day or two of the death of the dog.

When the handler is ready, the appropriate veterinarian will proceed with the cremation arrangements. The cremation will be a private cremation; the dog's body will be the only body in the retort. A fur clipping and a clay paw print will be done prior to cremation for the handler to keep.

The local media should be notified of the loss, and plans for the memorial service through a formal press release. The following supplies/services shall be made and/or acquired prior to setting memorial service date:

1. Flag,
2. Memorial/service site,
3. Floral arrangements,
4. Clergy, guest speaker, officials, Honor Guard, musicians (drums, bagpipes, etc.), Fire Department,
5. Printing of programs, portraits, or any other professional printing or artistry needed,
6. Sound system if needed for event,
7. Getting seating if needed,
8. Parking for Police K-9 vehicles, Police vehicles, and public,
9. Photographer (utilization of Department/office photographer, if available).

Once the preparation time of the above considerations have been established, the date can be set. Considerable care needs to be taken to coordinate the efforts of all of the above, so that items that have prerequisite steps are not delayed due to poor planning. A list of employees, guests, media, etc. to be invited needs to be generated along with current information, and a time frame set to notify all parties of the event. The dispatch center of the Department/office will be given a message to send through LEADS notifying police agencies of the service. One person should be responsible to make sure that all parties are notified in a timely fashion. This information shall include any dress code requirements.

**VI. Level 1 Funeral Protocols (K-9 Killed in the Line of Duty):**

- A. Every effort will be made by Department/office staff to ensure every member of the Department/office is able to attend the services of a Department/office K-9 who dies in the line of duty.
- B. A procession will start at a designated area and proceed to the memorial/service location where at the entrance of such location, the flag will be draped by the Fire Department.
- C. Prior to the service beginning, the state will be set. A proclamation provided by the Department/office will be placed on a small easel by the K-9's photograph. The stage will also include the flowers that have been sent.

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Prior to the actual service starting, the K-9 Department/office members and other Department/office members shall line up at the entrance. As the procession goes past these members, they shall stand at attention and salute. Bagpipes will start and lead the pallbearer(s) with the deceased K-9's remain into the memorial/service location, followed by a member of the Honor Guard carrying the folded flag. The deceased K-9's handler and family will follow, and be seated in the front row of the service location.

- D. The pallbearer shall bring the urn to the front, and place it on the easel next to the K-9's photograph. The Honor Guard shall remain at the side of the urn during the ceremony.
- E. An introduction/welcome will be given by the designated Command person.
- F. A prayer by the designated Chaplain/Priest will be offered.
- G. The service will also include this reading and/or a reading of the handlers choice:

*"K-9 Promise"*  
*My eyes are your eyes,*  
*To watch and protect you and yours,*  
*My ears are your ears,*  
*To hear and detect evil minds in the dark,*  
*My nose is your nose,*  
*To scent the invader is your domain,*  
*And so you may live,*  
*My life is also yours.*

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- H. Guest speakers/attendee comments.
- I. Closing remarks.
- J. Playing of bagpipes (Amazing Grace for example). As music fades, the presentation of the flag will be made to the handler by the Honor Guard.
- K. Upon commencement, "Taps" will be played.
- L. Final radio call (follow Department/office radio procedure).
- M. Dismissal instructions.

**VII. Level II Funeral Protocols (Active/Non Work Related K-9 Death):**

Same protocol will follow Level 1, with discretion of Command Personnel on honors for service. A service for the K-9, his handler and family as well as participants from the K-9 Force will be held. The service will be appropriate to honor the K-9's service to the community as well as the life of the K-9.

**VIII. Level III Funeral Protocols (Retired K-9 Death):**

After the death of the K-9, the K-9 Commander should be made aware. The handler's wishes should be taken into consideration before a plan is determined. The public at that time will be made aware of the loss, and the plans to honor the fallen. The honors to be given will be at the discretion of the Command personnel and the handler.